

6 March 1963

25X1A
TO: [REDACTED]
FROM: [REDACTED]
RE: The Soviet Presence in Cuba and some "way out" thoughts on the subject

1. It is conceivable that at some point in the future the Soviets may consider playing an active role in replacing Fidel Castro with a more compliant puppet.

2. Reasons for such Soviet action: Fidel Castro is not now and probably never will be as compliant a tool as Moscow would wish. He is playing around with the Chinese Communists in a way that must upset Moscow at this time. He is apparently competing with, rather than cooperating with, Moscow for the control of Latin American revolutionaries. The rapid development of "socialism" in Cuba under Fidel's guidance has confounded the careful formulations of Moscow theoreticians several years ago when they insisted that Cuba would have to go through the "~~national~~ ^{national} democracy" stage before it could even begin to "build socialism." Most important of all, Castro demonstrated last fall that he is not at all backward about drawing the USSR into a direct confrontation with the US in an area and on terms highly unfavorable to the USSR. Moscow may well have ~~justified~~ fears, well justified, that Castro might again attempt to draw the USSR into conflict with the US against ~~the~~ Moscow's wishes. In addition to all these considerations, it is apparent that Cuba has become an expensive drain on Soviet resources and there is no end in sight. Moscow may feel that it should be getting a better return on its money than Fidel is providing at the moment,--or is likely to in the future.

3. Timing and Methods: Moscow would probably like to have some assurances on Cuban self-control before it turns over the SAM sites to Cuba. If training of Cubans on SAM sites began in February, as has been reported, this time of decision could be about a year away.

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If the Soviets are thinking clearly, they probably recognize that replacing Fidel would be no easy task. His personal position, which ~~dominate~~ dominates the political scene, is almost a vital factor holding the regime together. If he is to be replaced with a minimum risk of having the regime disintegrate, it will probably have to be a slow methodical process of building ~~up~~ up the state machinery to give it strength to survive the departure of the "maximum leader." Whether or not this can be done is open to question, but whether it can or cannot be done is independent of the question: Do the Soviet's think it can be done.

[REDACTED] there exists in Cuba a Soviet controlled network independent of Castro and independent of the old veteran Cuban Communists and that this network, about which Castro and the old Communists may even be unaware, is likely to be the source of any Moscow ~~effort~~ effort to establish tighter control in Cuba.

4. The Potential Effect on the United States: As long as Fidel Castro remains in power, it is just about inconceivable that there can be any kind of a rapprochement between Cuba and the US. If Fidel is replaced by a Moscow-controlled regime—possibly one in which Moscow control is not easily identifiable—the question might be open. The question of the US "peacefully coexisting" with a Communist regime in this hemisphere might then become a question of considerable US policy debate. Moscow may see this as the only realistic way in which US hostility toward Cuba can be sufficiently reduced to give reasonable assurances of a continued—and perhaps expanding—Soviet presence in this hemisphere.